

LITTLE BEAR
STORIES



FRANCES MARGARET FOX



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STORIES



LITTLE BEAR STORIES

By

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M. V. G. 12.11-24.

To my dear little friend
Virginia Crane



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*Mother Rabbit said nothing to Little Bear, but just winked
and wrinkled her nose*

LITTLE BEAR STORIES

FORGET-ME-NOT TRAIL



ONCE a traveling brown bear came visiting the Three Bears in their house in the woods. He was a kind old fellow, and wise, but fond of joking.

After Little Bear had gone off to bed, Father Bear and Mother Bear were visiting with the stranger by their cozy fireside. The brown bear said he was pleased to see one young bear in the forest who obeyed and went to bed when he was told.

“And it pleases me,” said the old brown bear, “to meet a young bear

who doesn't think that all the bears in the woods should bow down to him because he does a good deed! Young bears like that are not common."

No one spoke; so the old bear went on: "Today I lost my staff over the cliff, and your son went down and brought it back to me."

"Quite right, sir," said Father Bear.

"Yes," agreed the old bear, "but when I wanted to reward him with a few honey-dried blackberries, he ran away. As he ran he called merrily over his shoulder, 'Thank you, sir, but what I did wasn't worth being paid for! Please forget it!'"

The old brown bear rose clumsily and began to fill the pockets of Little Bear's trousers with honey-dried blackberries. Soon the pockets were full and the trousers, which hung on a chair, were weighted down with the dried fruit.

After that, Father Bear, Mother Bear, and the old brown bear talked about how young bears should be brought up. The old bear said he should like to try to find out how many of the young bears in the forest were learning obedience. When he explained what he wanted to do Father Bear said, "Good, good!" but Mother Bear was not so sure. She said she was afraid that even Little Bear might not stand the test their guest had in mind.

The next day Father Bear introduced the brown bear to all the father bears in the neighborhood. They were proud to meet so famous a traveler and gladly agreed to his plan for testing the young bears. And so the next day all the young bears in the neighborhood were called to meet on Little Bear's playground. They all came and behaved very well. Indeed

they were so polite Little Bear almost felt as if he were among strangers. He, too, was very dignified and careful. No mother bears or father bears were present.

The old brown bear made a speech. He said he wished to meet all the young bears in a spot in the wildwood. There he would have swings ready for them, he said, and a pool for them to splash in, and plenty of good things to eat. He was planning a game for their parents, too. He called the game, "Find Your Child."

"If you choose," he went on to say, "you can have a very good time, whether you are well-behaved young bears or not, for you will be kept safe and well amused. But unless you wish to grieve your parents, obey their parting words. When I pass in the morning each of you must be waiting at his gate. I shall then whisper in

your ear the name of our secret meeting place. You must at once set out for it in a bee line."

The next morning Little Bear was waiting at the gate when the traveling brown bear came by. The brown bear had already called at the other front gates in the neighborhood.

"Meet me at Jolly Park Glen," whispered the old brown bear. "I shall be there before you, for I shall travel by the tunnel route. You go by the bee line. Now, scoot!"

"Remember, Son Bear," Father Bear called, "to be polite to everybody you meet! If you do a kind deed, remember to forget it!"

"Remember to forget it!" called Mother Bear in a trembling voice. Mother Bear did not like this special adventure.

Little Bear nodded, waved his hand, and hurried along on his bee-line path.

He had not gone far in the forest when an old squirrel tumbled from an oak tree and lost all his nuts. Little Bear stopped to pick them up for him.



An old squirrel tumbled down from an oak tree and lost the nuts

“You are kind, Little Bear, and I thank you,” said the squirrel.

Little Bear answered politely, “Oh, that was only a pleasure,” and at once forgot that he had done a kind

deed. Then when he looked over his shoulder to wave his hand he saw a strange sight. The squirrel was planting a forget-me-not.

On ran Little Bear until he found a lost baby rabbit who was crying sadly. "Where do you live?" asked Little Bear.

"Back under the pink wild-rose bush," answered the baby rabbit. "Oh, do carry me home by the ears!"

Little Bear did so, but the mother rabbit did not even say, "Thank you." She spanked the baby rabbit for running away. Then she calmly chewed a dandelion leaf, tip-end first, rabbit fashion. She said nothing to Little Bear, but just winked and wrinkled her nose. For a minute Little Bear felt cross to think he had gone out of his way to be a nurse for a baby rabbit. He felt cross because he had not even been thanked for it.

Then, "Never mind," he said to himself, and ran merrily on his way. He turned round to wave his hand at



Little Bear goes traveling down Forget-me-not Trail

the mother rabbit. But she was busy planting a forget-me-not and did not see him.

Little Bear did a great many kind deeds before he reached Jolly Park Glen, and forgot them all. He let them slide right off his mind. But he could not forget that many wildwood folk were busy planting that morning. He

wondered why they were all planting forget-me-nots.

Little Bear ran into the glen, dancing for joy. He had traveled lightly and happily all the way. Now when he met the old brown bear in the glen he was brimming over with good nature.

“Am I the first one to get here?” asked Little Bear. He didn’t hear the other bears playing.

“No,” said the old brown bear, “your young friends are all here. But they are tired because they carried unpleasant thoughts on the way.”

Sure enough, there were the other little bears, sitting around on stumps, all feeling much too cross to play.

“What is the trouble?” asked Little Bear.

“We were badly treated on our journey,” said one. “All the wild-wood folk wanted us to work for them. Then, when we did stop once

in a while to help them we didn't get any thanks. When we looked back, instead of tending their gardens, they were all planting brambles!"

Just then the forest band began to play. After an hour or two Father Bear and Mother Bear came into the glen. Each of them carried a huge bouquet of forget-me-nots.

"Do you wish to stay here and play?" asked Mother Bear. She looked into her son's face.

"No, thank you," answered Little Bear. "There is no fun here, even if there *are* swings and a pool."

The old brown bear served honey, berries, and ice cream, and then the Three Bears went back home happy. As they left the glen the little bears who were to wait for their parents set up a howl.

"How did you find me so quickly?" asked Little Bear.

“We followed the forget-me-not trail.”

“The forget-me-not trail!” said Little Bear in surprise.

“Yes, your footsteps along the beeline path were marked by blooming forget-me-nots, and so we had no trouble in finding you.”

Little Bear looked thoughtful. Then he began to skip and sing as usual.

Late that afternoon Father Bear came in looking worried. “The bears in the forest are all in tears,” he said, “because they cannot follow their children. Brambles have grown up in the children’s footsteps. They are so high and so thick no one can get through.”

“Oh, why didn’t we ask the name of the place where their children are waiting!” cried Mother Bear.

“I know the name!” exclaimed Little Bear. “It is our old picnic

place, Jolly Park Glen! The father and mother bears can get there easily and quickly by the tunnel route. Let me go and tell the fathers and mothers about it.”

Little Bear raced off, and soon there was a tramp of footsteps, slip-slop, slip-slop, slip-slop! through the tunnel leading to Jolly Park Glen.

The old traveling brown bear heard the parents coming. “Good night, children,” he said to the unhappy little bears. Then he hurried away, slip-slop, slip-slop, slip-slop! He left the honey and berries and ice cream behind. When the father and mother bears reached the glen not a single little bear had tasted a mouthful.

The next day came many, many grateful father bears and mother bears. They came to thank Little Bear for his kindness in coming to tell them where to find their children.

“Oh, that was nothing!” said Little Bear. “Please forget it.”

Then politely, but with mischief in his eyes, Little Bear stuck a sprig of forget-me-not behind his ear and ran away to play.



LAUGHING TIME

One morning big Father Bear and Little Bear went for a walk. Middle-sized Mother Bear stayed at home to put the porridge over the fire and have breakfast ready for them when they came back.

It was a fine summer morning, and Father Bear and Little Bear were happy. They were just beginning to have what Little Bear called a "laughing time." Then something dreadful happened. Father Bear stepped into a trap!

He was walking along looking at the tree tops instead of at the ground under his feet. All at once down he went, down, down into a deep hole! Little Bear would have stepped into the hole, too, if he had not been chasing a butterfly.

“Climb a tree quickly, Son Bear, so no one can get you,” said Father Bear. “This looks to me like boys’ work. Up you go, and don’t you cry!”

Up a tree went Little Bear quickly, and he didn’t cry.

“Boys have done this,” Father Bear went on. “You see, they dug a deep hole and put branches across it. Then they piled earth on top of the branches, and here I am!”

And just then, out from the bushes dashed six big boys, laughing and shouting, “We caught him! We caught him!”

“He must be a good-natured old fellow,” cried one of the boys. “He winked at me as if he would like to tell us a joke!”

Sure enough, Father Bear winked first at one boy and then at another until all were standing beside the trap, laughing with him and laughing at him.

But that was not Little Bear's laughing time.

After the boys had laughed at Father Bear and poked fun at him, they started back to camp to tell their fathers they had caught one of the Three Bears in a trap.

"You will soon be traveling with a circus, Mr. Bear!" one boy called back. "We shall bring ropes and tie you hand and foot."

And that was not Little Bear's laughing time.

"Now, then," said Father Bear to Little Bear when the boys were gone, "we must work quickly, and mind you don't cry! There is no time for tears when you are in





trouble. Go and ask Friend Blue Jay to call all our neighbors. And then you, Son Bear, begin at once to roll stones and lumps of earth into this hole for me to stand on.”

Little Bear went and did as his father told him. At once Friend Blue Jay spread the news that Father Bear was in a bear trap and needed help. When it was all over Father Bear said he didn't know he had so many friends till he was in trouble.

The friends all came running from every direction to help

Little Bear roll stones into the hole and to throw lumps of earth into it. All the time Father Bear had to keep dancing and dodging to keep them from hitting his feet and head.

But that was not Little Bear's laughing time.

Soon so much had been thrown into the pit that the top of Father Bear's head could be seen. Then Little Bear, Bob and Maria Wildcat, the Beaver family, the Otters, the Squirrels, the Chipmunks, and all the other wild-wood friends worked harder than ever. Pretty soon they had so many stones and so much earth in the bottom of the hole Father Bear said he knew he could climb out if some of them would reach down and help him. They reached down and took hold of him and pulled hard—and out he came.

At that very moment back came the men and boys with a rope to

capture big Father Bear and tie him hand and foot. But when they saw Father Bear had scrambled out of the hole and all his friends and neighbors were walking around him shaking hands, they ran away. Every boy and man turned and ran as fast as he could. The tallest man went flying through the woods so fast he looked like a straight line. The fat man hustled along so fast he might have been taken for a rubber ball. The boys! They scattered like autumn leaves before the north wind.

That was Little Bear's laughing time!

"It was the funniest sight I ever saw," he said, when the Three Bears at last sat down to breakfast.

Ever afterward, when Little Bear thought of how funny the tall man, the fat man, and the boys looked running away from good-natured Father Bear and their kind neighbors, that was another laughing time.



All at once the log began to move. Then over it rolled

LEARNING TO SWIM

Last summer Little Bear went on a long journey with Father Bear and Mother Bear. The Three Bears had a beautiful time walking through the big forest until they came to the banks of a deep, swift river. Then there was trouble, for Little Bear could not swim, nor did he wish to learn how to swim. He said he was afraid of the water.

“Anyway, Father Bear can just as well carry me over the river,” Little Bear said.

“Nonsense!” replied big Father Bear in gruff tones. “Nonsense, my son! You are old enough and strong enough to learn to swim. I will not carry you across the stream. Neither shall your mother.”

Just then Father Otter came by, swimming like a seal, and twisting and turning in the water like a fish.

“Perhaps the good Otter will teach Little Bear how to swim,” Mother Bear said, and called to him.

“It is the easiest thing in the world to teach a little bear how to swim,” answered Father Otter. “Just throw him in!” And away he went, laughing over his shoulder.

“He must be joking,” Mother Bear said quickly. She was afraid Father Bear would toss Little Bear into the river, and she did not like the idea.

At that moment Mother Otter came swimming down the river with her children. One of them climbed upon her shoulders and stared round-eyed at Little Bear on the river bank.

“Good morning!” said Mother Bear.

“Good morning!” answered Mother Otter.

“Your children are fine swimmers,” added Mother Bear.

“Certainly,” replied Mother Otter. “Every one of them knows that our people have been famous swimmers for ages.”

“I suppose, then,” said Mother Bear, “all your children were born swimmers. You probably had trouble in keeping them out of the water when they were babies.”

Mother Otter laughed merrily. Then she said, “The trouble was to get them into the water. The silly little things were afraid. All young otters are afraid of the water, and you have to push them into it.”

“You don’t mean it!” exclaimed Mother Bear, in great surprise.

“Indeed I do,” replied Mother Otter. “We had to push every one of our children into the water. Does Little Bear know how to swim?”

“No,” answered Mother Bear, shaking her head. “He is afraid to try.”

“Duck him,” advised Mother Otter. “Duck him. There is no other way to teach a little bear to swim.”

And away she went, hurrying down the stream, to overtake Father Otter.

The little Otters kept looking back, hoping to see Father Bear toss Little Bear into the river. But Mother Bear begged him not to teach Little Bear to swim that day, so the little Otters missed the fun.

That night the Three Bears camped beside the deep, swift river. Little Bear was soon fast asleep cuddled down in his bed of leaves and springy boughs. Then Mother Bear made Father Bear promise not to toss Little Bear into the river unless Little Bear said he wanted him to.

The next morning Father Bear was sorry he had made the promise to

Mother Bear. He was sorry because an honest-looking polecat who came across the stream told Father Bear and Mother Bear that across on the other shore the largest, sweetest blackberries in the forest were ripe.

“But,” whispered Mother Bear to Father Bear, “aren’t you sorry now you told him we wouldn’t carry him over?”

“Sure enough, I am,” agreed Father Bear. And then he laughed at the joke on himself.

“Well,” said Mother Bear at last, “I shall coax Little Bear to let you toss him gently into the river. I shall be ready to catch him if he cannot swim.”

“Nonsense!” grumbled Father Bear. Then he stopped laughing and said, “While you coax, I shall go for a walk.”

But coaxing did not do any good. When Little Bear saw his father

wander away he told his mother he did not feel like going into the water that morning. He hoped she would please excuse him. So Mother Bear excused him.

Soon Father Bear came back, smiling and happy. "I've found a bridge for Little Bear," said he. "An old log has fallen across the river a little way upstream. In the woods on the other side of the stream the blackberries are almost as big as duck's eggs. Little Bear can walk across on the log."

"All right, I'll do it," promised Little Bear. He followed his father gladly until the Three Bears reached the bridge.

Then Little Bear ran ahead and began skipping joyfully over the log. He was trying to reach the opposite bank before his father and mother could swim across. All at once the log began to move. Then over it rolled,

and sent Little Bear with a great splash into the river. He knew enough to keep



his mouth shut, and in a little while up he bobbed, shaking his head to get the water out of his eyes and his ears and paddling like a duck. That was all there was to it. Ever after that, Little Bear could swim.

Mother Bear believes to this day that Father Bear knew the log would roll over. She believes it for, whenever any one asks him, he says nothing, but just laughs.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

One morning Mother Bear looked up from her work just in time to see a merry-looking young black bear walking up the garden path from the river. He carried a stick over his shoulder, and a bundle swung from the end of it.

“Who can he be?” asked Father Bear, in big big-bear tones. As he spoke he left his work to look through the open window.

“Who can he be?” asked Mother Bear, in middle-sized-bear tones.

“Who can he be?” piped in Little Bear, in his shrill baby-bear voice. As the stranger came up the path he sang:

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la-la-la.

Oh, let me live in the greenwood,

The greenwood, the greenwood!

Then, with a hop and a skip and a jump, the merry-looking young bear came to knock at the Bears' back door.



Cousin Blueberry Bear out for himself

“Why, Blueberry Bear!” exclaimed Mother Bear, as the stranger lifted his cap and walked in. “I didn’t know you! How you have grown! Why, Father Bear, this is Cousin Black Bear’s

eldest son! How are you, child? Come, Little Bear, this is your Cousin Blueberry! How you have grown, child!"

Blueberry shook hands all round. Then he stood, smiling from ear to ear, until he was asked to be seated.

"I have left home to look out for myself," he said, as he sat down on the wash bench and laid his bundle beside him. "My father told me I had better camp near you, so I should have some one to tell me what to do."

"You shall live right here with us," said Mother Bear.

But Blueberry shook his head, saying, "Father says I am big enough to begin looking out for myself. I must be off now to build myself a camp."

The Three Bears then helped young Blueberry build himself a camp half a mile from their house down on the river trail. When they left him that

afternoon he was gathering sticks for his camp fire, and singing as he worked:

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la-la-la.

Oh, let me live in the greenwood,

The greenwood, the greenwood!

Little Bear walked backward until a bend in the road hid Blueberry's camp from sight. Even then he stood still to listen a little longer to that merry voice.

“When I get as big as he is, I am going to look out for myself,” he said. Then he, too, began to sing:

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la-la-la.

Oh, let me live in the greenwood,

The greenwood, the greenwood!

Every day after that the Three Bears went to see Blueberry, and every day Blueberry came to see them. He

used to thump Little Bear on the head and say, "How are you, old man?" But he never played with him. No swinging in grapevine swings for him, no running races, no playing skipping games. He used to push his cap to the back of his head and talk with Father Bear about fishing and hunting. He talked as if he were old enough to be the grandfather of the whole family.

Little Bear liked to have Blueberry thump him hard on the head and say, "How are you, old man?" He used to wish and wish he were tall enough to thump back. But Little Bear could not reach the top of Blueberry's head without standing on a stump

After Blueberry came to camp in the forest, Little Bear began to talk about leaving home and looking out for himself. He talked about it from morning until night. As he talked he

walked round with a stick over his shoulder, singing his loudest:

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la-la-la.

Oh, let me live in the greenwood,

The greenwood, the greenwood!

Blueberry laughed when he heard about it. One day, after talking with Father Bear, he thumped Little Bear on the head and said:

“Old man, why don’t you live with me, and learn to look out for yourself?”

“For always?” asked Little Bear.

“Surely,” was the answer. “You are big enough. Pack up and come along.”

“Shall I run away? Do you mean that?”

“Certainly not! Never run away from home. Ask your father and your kind mother. Then start out like a brave young bear.”

Little Bear was surprised when Father Bear said, "You may go, my son," and Mother Bear said, "Yes, you may go."

So he went, with a stick over his shoulder and a bundle swinging from the end of it. And as he went down the trail he sang the same old song of the greenwood.

Blueberry Bear welcomed Little Bear with open arms. All that first day Little Bear had a merry time. By night he was so tired that he went to sleep before the Man in the Moon looked down upon the camp.

The next day the Two Bears came visiting. They found Little Bear getting sticks for the camp fire and having a merry time. Mother Bear, when she went home, walked backward until she reached the bend in the river road. Even then she stood still for a moment listening to Little Bear singing in his shrill, happy voice.

That night at bedtime Blueberry said to Little Bear, "Old man, I may get up after moonrise and go fishing. Do not worry about me if you wake up and find I am not here."

Little Bear did wake up in the moonlight. Blueberry was not in his bed. Little Bear did not worry about him, but he did want his mother. He wanted her so much that he stepped lightly out into the moonlight and started on the jump for home. When halfway there he ran bump into a big, soft somebody. It was his mother!

"O Mother Bear!" cried Little Bear, with both arms around her big soft neck. "How did you ever know I wanted you?"

"I didn't know you wanted me," was her answer. "But I wanted you so much I was coming after you."

Then the two laughed so merrily that Blueberry heard them and came



“O Mother Bear! How did you know I wanted you?”

running, for he was near by, fishing in the river.

At once Little Bear jumped upon a stump and thumped Blueberry hard on the shoulder. "Old man," said he, "I am going home with my mother. She needs me, and I need her. We can't get along without each other. I don't care if you do laugh."

"I'm not laughing," said Blueberry. "Do you think I should be so far from home if I had a mother? No, sir-ree! But I have no mother. If I had, big as I am and grown up, I should toss my fish pole over the moon and start for home this minute."

"Come with us tonight, Blueberry," said Mother Bear gently, "and sleep on the couch at our house. It will be pleasanter going back to camp in the sunshine than by moonlight."

So that night Blueberry slept on the couch in the Three Bears' house.

In the morning sunshine he went back to camp, singing merrily:

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la,

Tra-la-la-la-la.

Oh, let me live in the greenwood,

The greenwood, the greenwood!

As for Little Bear, he danced all that day and sang the old-home tune with Father Bear and Mother Bear:

Ta-de-dum,

Ta-de-dum,

Ta-de-dum-dum-dum!

Little Bear had learned there is no place like home.

THE LOST OTTER BABY

One morning, while Little Bear was out camping with his father and mother, he went into the woods to pick daisies and bluebells. His hands were full of flowers, and he was ready to go back with them to his mother, when he heard a baby crying. Little Bear stood still and listened. Then he knew that the crying child was an Otter baby. He had heard Otter babies cry before.

“What is the matter, baby?” called Little Bear. “What are you crying about, and where are you? Did you bump your nose?”

“I’m lost! Come and find me!” answered Baby Otter.

“I see you hiding behind the oak stump!” exclaimed Little Bear, as he

scrambled through the thicket and fairly pounced upon Baby Otter. "I spy!" he shouted.

"It isn't a game!" whimpered the Otter baby. "I tell you I'm lost! I don't know where my mother went, and I can't find my father! I want to go home, I do! Oh, boo-hoo-hoo!"

"There, there, don't cry," said Little Bear. "Tell me where your home is, and I'll take you there just as fast as we can go."

"But we do not live here!" whined the lost Otter baby. "Our home is Brookside, a long way off across country. We are only camping out, and I do not know where our camp is! Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo!"

"Come, come, cheer up!" said Little Bear, using the very words his father often used in speaking to him. "I tell you I will take you home. If it is too far away I'll ask my father to

go. We are camping out, ourselves, down the river a little way. Now tell me how you got lost.”

So the Otter baby told him that the Otter family had gone out walking that morning, after breakfast. While they were laughing and chatting Baby Otter had strayed away from the path to pick flowers. The next thing he knew he was alone, and, not knowing what else to do, he had sat down and cried.

“Well, wipe your eyes now, and give me your paw!” said Little Bear in big, grown-up tones. “My father showed me an otter camp only yesterday. If you are one of the campers you live only a little way from here. I can take you home.”

Of course Baby Otter wiped his eyes and walked happily behind Little Bear. He traveled in single file, otter fashion.

Now Father Bear had been teaching Little Bear how to follow the woods trails or paths. Little Bear knew the



Otters' paths, because they always went round stumps and under logs. Besides, their legs were so short and their bodies so heavy they always left well-worn trails behind them.

At last Little Bear reached the end of the crooked path. There, without so much as saying "Thank you!" to Little Bear, Baby Otter ran to the

cave by the river bank where his family was camping out.

“Some people always forget their manners,” said Little Bear to himself, as he ran home to tell his father and mother what he had done.

“I am glad you were good to the baby,” said Little Bear’s mother. She took the bluebells and daisies he had brought and put them into a hollow stump beside the cave door. She had filled the stump with water from the spring while Little Bear was gone.

“The flowers are lovely!” said Mother Bear. “Now please run into the woods for some green leaves and vines to put with them.”

Before Little Bear could do as she told him, Uncle John Kingfisher came flying to invite the Three Bears to a party. “The Otters,” said he, “request your presence at a fish dinner. Come now.”

“We thank you for your kindness, Uncle John Kingfisher,” said Father Bear. “We shall start at once. Come, Little Bear, wash your hands and face and get ready.”

That is how it came about that the Three Bears dined with the Otters that day on trout, salmon, and eels. They were served with only one bite from each fish, and that bite taken from the meat just behind the head. Mother Bear thought the Otters chose only one dainty morsel from each fish just because they had invited company for dinner. But Father Bear told her she was mistaken. The Otters always serve fish in that way when fish are plentiful.

After dinner the Otters and their guests rested for a while. Then Father Otter invited the children to come out and play with him and Mother Otter. Much surprised, the Three Bears

followed the Otters to their playground. And the next Father Bear and Mother Bear knew, Little Bear was sliding down the Otters' toboggan slide and



shouting with glee. All the Otters went lickety-split down that slide, one behind the other, landing splashety-splash! in the river below.

And it was a wonderful sight to see them swimming about in the stream. The Otters are beautiful swimmers. But what Father and Mother Bear

liked best was watching Little Bear. He ran up the roundabout path to the top of the bank and went down the slide three times as fast as the Otter children and their parents. The Otters were more at home in the water than Little Bear, but they could not run on land as he could.

Their next game they played with sticks. One Otter took the end of a stick in his mouth and another Otter took the other end, then they pulled and pulled to see which was the stronger. Little Bear did not like that game so well as he did the toboggan slide.

At last it was time to go home. "We have had a lovely time at your party," said Mother Bear to Mother Otter, "and we thank you for inviting us over. If you ever wander into our home woods, be sure and come to our house and have porridge with us."

“We shall be glad to do so,” said Mother Otter. “And we shall always think kindly of Little Bear because he brought our baby home when he was lost. If we do go to visit you, you must let us make Little Bear a toboggan slide.”

“Ask them to come as soon as we get home!” Little Bear whispered to his mother. But he whispered so loud the Otter children heard what he said and laughed.

And that night Little Bear dreamed of taking home a baby Otter and of being invited to slide down that baby Otter’s toboggan slide all the afternoon.

THE NEAREST WAY HOME

One day Little Bear was playing alone in a sunny clearing in the old forest. He was wishing a wish with his eyes shut. "This is the wish I wish," said he. "I wish some one would come and play with me."

Then Little Bear opened his eyes, and his wish came true.

Into the sunny clearing came four little Deer children. At first they stepped timidly into Little Bear's playground. But when they saw he was alone, and heard him sing, they knew they had nothing to fear. They knew he wished them to come.

"What is your name?" Little Bear asked the tallest Deer child.

"My name is Lightfoot," was the answer, "because I can run fast."

“My name is Fleetfoot,” said the next Deer in size, “because I can run fast, too.”

“Swimmy is my name,” piped up the third Deer child, “because I like to swim.”

Now the fourth little Deer, the baby one, had stayed behind. His three cousins looked back to see what he was doing. They saw him on his knees smelling white violets that grew in a mossy bed.

“What is the name of the baby one?” asked Little Bear.

“His name is Wonder,” Lightfoot replied, “because he always wonders about everything, and then we laugh.”

At that very moment Baby Wonder ran across the clearing as lightly as a soap bubble. Just in front of Little Bear he stopped suddenly and smiled.

“I’d like to hug you, Baby Deer,” said Little Bear, “for your eyes are so soft and brown, and I love you!”

“I wonder what your name is?” were the first words that Baby Deer said to Little Bear. Then Lightfoot, Fleetfoot, Swimmy, and Little Bear all laughed.

“My name is Little Bear,” was the answer. “This is my playground.”

“I wonder if you know about us?” was Baby Deer’s next question. And then he began to dance lightly, hoppity-skip, hoppity-skip, round a fairy ring.

“No, I do not, but I hope you will all play with me,” Little Bear cried. And he began dancing, hoppity-skip, hoppity-skip, round another fairy ring.

“We are campers,” said Lightfoot, “and for a few days we’re camping a little way from your house.” And he, too, found a fairy ring and danced, hoppity-skip, hoppity-skip, around it.

There were merry doings after that all the afternoon. When Little Bear

said, "Let us play 'Ring around a Rosy,'" that was the game. Then Fleetfoot wanted to play "London Bridge," and then "London Bridge" was the game. So all the afternoon they played one game after another, until Lightfoot said he would like to run races.

Now Little Bear did not want to run races with the Deer children. He knew he could not run fast enough to keep up even with Baby Wonder. But at once he picked up a stick and drew a line in the soft earth.

"All stand in a row!" rang out his happy voice. "All stand in a row until I say 'Go.' One, two, three, go!"

Off they went. Little Bear did his best to run fast, but soon Lightfoot, Fleetfoot, Swimmy, and Wonder left him far behind. At last Little Bear was quite out of breath. Then the Deer children hurried back to the goal and

waited for him to rest. Then off they all ran, calling joyfully, "Can't catch me! Can't catch me!"

Little Bear could not catch one of the Deer children. But he tried hard to catch them, and ran on and on, not knowing where they were going. Several times they crossed the river on stepping-stones and on bridges of fallen trees.

At last they came to a place where the river was deep and wide. Little Bear would go no farther. The sun was fast sinking behind the distant hills, and he knew he was lost. When Little Bear would not follow, the Deer children came back, because Baby Wonder wished to know why Little Bear stopped playing.

"We are lost, and we must find ourselves," said Little Bear.

"Let us try the river," said Swimmy.
"Can you swim, Little Bear?"

“I can swim in a good swimming place,” answered Little Bear. “But—I’m afraid to—to try it here.”

Then to Little Bear’s great dismay, the Deer children began to whimper and cry, “We’re lost! We’re lost! We cannot find ourselves! We’re lost and cannot find ourselves!”

“Don’t cry! Stop this minute!” cried Little Bear. “My father says when you are in trouble you must be brave so you can think. So please stop crying, so I can think!”

The Deer children at once stopped crying so Little Bear could think.

“Now, I wonder what you’ve thought of?” little Wonder asked at last, and all the others laughed.

“I’ve thought that I’ll climb this tall tree and look around to see if I can find a short way home,” answered Little Bear. Then up he went. He knew that Deer children cannot climb trees.



W h e n Little Bear reached the top of the tree, he put up his paw to shade his eyes and looked across the river. Just across the river; a little to the east, he saw his house in plain sight. And just beyond that he saw the Deer's camping ground with the fire burning brightly.

Little Bear was afraid to try to swim across that wide, deep place in the river. He did not like to go all by himself the long way home through the woods to the nearest bridge. If he told all the truth,

he knew the Deer children would swim straight across the river and expect him to follow. If he kept still, he could lead them home safely and have company himself.

Just then Baby Wonder said, "I wonder if you know what a good Little Bear you are!"

"Oh, dear me!" murmured Little Bear. Then he told the Deer children their camp was just across the river. Before he could even tell them which way to go on the other side, they slipped into the river and swam across to the farther shore.

"Come along, Little Bear, come along!" They called so loud they didn't hear him shouting to them which way to go. They must not go toward the sunset, for that was the trail to Farmlands.

Then Little Bear made a horn of his hands and shouted after the children

to come back. But he leaned too far over and fell with a great splash into the deep pool. The next thing he knew he was swimming toward the bank. He had not known he could swim that easily.

“Now I suppose I must run after the Deer children and try to call them back,” he thought. Just then he saw them standing still, waiting for him.

“Come along! Come along!” they shouted. “We’ll give you a good start!”

Then how Little Bear laughed! He pointed the way home, and the race began with Little Bear far, far ahead. On came the four Deer children, jumping over rocks and brambles and stumps. But Little Bear reached his own gate first and won the race.

That night Baby Wonder came to the Three Bears’ home with a basket in his hands.

“My mother,” said he, “sent the sweetest blackberries she could find in



the woods for Little Bear's supper. I wonder why?"

Mother Bear also wondered why. But when she gave Baby Wonder four honey cakes to take home she kissed him. And she kissed Little Bear, too.

THE WILDCAT BABIES

One time the Wildcat babies ran away. It was late in the afternoon when Little Bear found them crying beside the brook. They were not far from home, but they were on the wrong side of the brook.

“Swim across!” cried the Beavers. But the baby Wildcats were afraid of the water and would not try to swim.

“Wade in, wade in!” said Father Deer. The baby Wildcats would not wade into the water. They shook their front paws. They did not like to get wet.

“Slide right in and paddle over!” called out Mrs. Otter. But the baby Wildcats would not slide in and paddle over. They were afraid of the water. They did not like to get wet.

“Float over, float over!” said the Ducks. But the baby Wildcats would not even try to float.

“Jump on a log and spread your tails wide and sail across!” said the Red Squirrel. But the Wildcat babies did not dare jump on a log. They were afraid the log would roll over and dump them into the water.

By the time Little Bear came along, the baby Wildcats were spilling big tears into the brook and crying at the top of their voices. Little Bear could not help laughing at them. But he felt sorry for his little neighbors, and made up his mind to help them. He thought and thought and thought and thought. At last he asked the baby Wildcats how they came to be so near home and yet on the wrong side of the brook.

“Mother went away and didn’t come back,” Yowler said, “and I said

we ought to stay home and be good, but—”

“He did not!” cried Billy Wildcat. “He said, ‘Ma will never know if we go walking just a little way,’ didn’t he, Mewey?”

“Yes, he did,” answered Mewey. “And we walked and we walked until we were lost—and Yowler was the worst one of us. Why, why, Yowler! Yes, you were!”

“Now don’t quarrel,” said Little Bear. “I want to know how you came to be on the wrong side of the brook.”

“Yowler, he made us cross the away-off-seven-mile bridge,” was Owley’s answer.

“If you don’t stop quarreling, I shall leave you,” scolded Little Bear. “And now I know what to do. If you will be good, we will build a bridge. I’ll carry big stones and drop

them into the brook, and every one of you shall bring little stones.”

So at once Little Bear began building a bridge of stones. It was hard work, but he tugged at rocks and rolled stones and lifted stones. He splashed and worked and worked and splashed until at last there was a fair bridge of stones across the singing brook. The baby Wildcats did not help much because they were too busy quarreling and crying.

“Now step over,” said Little Bear, “and be careful you do not slip.”

One by one the little “’fraid cats,” stepping high, and careful not to slip, crossed the brook safely. At last Little Bear left them at their own door, just as Mother Wildcat came home.

“You naughty children!” she cried. “I have hunted over the woods far and near for you! There is a circus



"Now step over," said Little Bear, "and do not slip"

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man wandering round here, and it is a wonder he didn't find you! Scoot into the house this minute!"

"Little Bear is good!" piped up the shrill voice of little sister Mewey. "He made a stone bridge for us and brought us home!" Little Bear loved her for owning up like that.

"Well," said Mrs. Wildcat, "if he knows what is good for him, he'll be glad to have me take him home. If I don't the circus man may get him."

Little Bear did know what was good for him, so he gladly put his little wet paw into Mrs. Wildcat's paw and trotted off by her side. Mrs. Maria Wildcat was cross but she meant well, and he knew it. Some folks are always cross when they are worried. Anyway, she took Little Bear home. Great was Little Bear's surprise when, on reaching his own gate, Mrs. Wildcat stopped and said,

“Mer—rrow! Mer—rrow!” in her most impolite fashion.

Father Bear and Mother Bear came running down the path from the house to see what was the matter. At that very moment up jumped the circus man from beside the gate, where he had been hiding, and ran away. He ran as fast as he could go, flying down the road so fast he looked like a straight line.

For the first time in his life Little Bear kissed Mrs. Maria Wildcat good night without being told. And all that evening until bedtime he and Father Bear played a merry game of Mrs. Maria Wildcat scaring a circus man—“Mer—rrow! Mer—rrow! Mer—rrow!”

THE WOODCHUCK BABIES

Little Bear loved the old Ground Hog, whose other name is Woodchuck. The reason he loved him was that every year, on the second day of February, Mr. Ground Hog wakes from his long winter's sleep, comes out of his hole, and goes out for a walk. If he sees his shadow, back to bed he goes, to sleep six weeks more. If he doesn't see his shadow, he travels joyfully about, telling the world spring has come.

Little Bear liked to get up early in the year, while there was still snow on the ground. That's another reason why he loved the old Ground Hog. In the fall old Ground Hog used to wink at Little Bear and promise, "Yes, yes, Little Bear, I'll call your

father early, if I do not have to go back to bed myself for another long nap.”

Little Bear loved the Woodchuck babies. Sometimes the babies played in the woods with him all day long. But he always wondered why they laughed when he would say, “Little Woodchucks, my mother is calling me. It is time now to run home to your mother.”

At last the gayly dressed Blue Jay told Little Bear that Woodchuck babies have to take care of themselves as soon as they are a few weeks old. Little Bear was wondering about this and feeling sorry, when Father Ground Hog came along and told him it had always been that way in the Woodchuck family. He said no harm comes to little Woodchucks if they mind their parents and stay in the woods. If they visit farmers’ gardens and eat the farmers’ beans and peas they’re

often shot or caught in traps or killed by dogs.

“So long, Little Bear, as our children stay in the woods or in the meadows, and eat grass and clover,” he said, “they are safe and happy. You never saw a little Woodchuck crying!”

Little Bear laughed and said no, he never *had* seen a baby Woodchuck crying.

“I’ll take care of the Woodchuck babies,” he promised their father, “if you will tell me what traps are like, so I can look for them.”

“Very well,” said Father Woodchuck. “I will tell you how a steel trap works. It lies on the ground like an open book, only it is hidden by grass and leaves. In the middle of the trap is a little pan, and on that pan lies something good to eat. When the little Woodchuck sees the good thing to eat he tries to get it, and in

trying to get it steps on the pan or presses it down with his nose. Snap! the spring shuts quickly, and the little fellow is caught fast in the trap. He can't get away by pulling the trap with him, for it is fastened by a chain to a log or an old stump."

The old Woodchuck then walked away slowly, chuckling to himself. He was really laughing at Little Bear, for he didn't believe there was a steel trap in all the old woods.

Little Bear had told his father and mother about his talk with their old friend. Then he asked, "What shall I do if I find a trap?"

Father Bear didn't think for a moment that Little Bear would ever find a trap in the forest. So he laughed and said, "Take a long thick stick, Little Bear, and let the stick step on the pan and get caught. Then for a while the trap cannot catch anything else."

“I’ll do it,” promised Little Bear. “I’ll look and look and look for traps. Then the baby Woodchucks will always be safe.”

“If you ever should find a trap,” said Mother Bear, “be careful to stand a long way off from it when you poke the stick on the pan. Do it this way.” And Mother Bear did her best with a broom to show Little Bear how to spring a trap.

She looked so funny, leaning over, thumping the floor with a broom, that Little Bear laughed and forgot to feel sorry for the young Woodchucks. Father Bear laughed, too, and when he laughed of course Mother Bear laughed. Then right away the three had a jolly dance.

The next time Little Bear took the baby Woodchucks to play in his playground he looked and looked and looked for a trap. Sure enough, he



Little Bear finds a trap lying in the grass

found one. It was lying in the grass, a tempting bit of honeycomb, just dripping with honey. For a moment he thought of nothing except the honey, and was about to tell the baby Woodchucks to help themselves. Then he thought, "What if there should be a trap under it to catch them!" So he cried out, "Wait a moment!" and held back the baby Woodchucks.

Sure enough, when he poked away the leaves and grass, there was the trap, and there was the chain fastened to a stump! It was such a big trap Little Bear did not dare spring it with a stick. So home he ran for his father and mother to come and show him how to do it.

When Father Bear saw the trap he looked carefully into the bushes, and then, before Little Bear had time to wink, away Father Bear went, rushing through the bushes! The next thing

Little Bear knew he saw four big boys running like deer through the woods!

Father Bear came running back, out of breath and laughing. Then he put the end of his cane on the spring and—clang! went the big trap.

“Little Bear,” said Father Bear quietly, “it is a good thing for you and for all of us that you took such good care of the little Woodchucks. That is a bear trap, and those boys were trying to catch you. But I frightened them badly, and they will never, never come to your playground again.”

Sure enough, the boys never did. As for the baby Woodchucks, they thanked Little Bear for showing them how to look out for traps, and for a long time they all lived happily together.

LEADING THE PROCESSION

Little Bear was not always good. Once he was very, very selfish in his heart. It was the time the Oak Tree Squirrel families at North Bend lost their winter store of nuts. During a terrible storm in the forest, all the trees at North Bend were blown to the ground and the old oak tree was swept away down the river, nuts and all.

There were no lives lost. But what were the squirrels to eat that winter now all their nuts were gone? The old oak tree had a big hollow trunk. In the bottom was a storeroom for nuts. When the old oak was swept away not a nut was saved. Bushels and bushels and bushels of nuts went with it. The work of many busy

squirrels during a long autumn was lost.

Father Bear and Mother Bear were sorry to hear of the trouble that had come to the merry-hearted squirrels. So were all the friends and neighbors. At last Nimby Chipmunk—Nimby is short for Nimble—made a speech. He asked if all the nut gatherers would not give a share of their own nuts to the squirrels, to help them through the long winter. Squirrels up the river and squirrels down the river, squirrels who lived in holes in the ground, chipmunks from far and near, even the blue jays, gladly promised to share their acorns.

“Now,” said Nimby Chipmunk, “let us ask the forest band to play. Then we will march to North Bend with our gifts.”

The leader of the forest band at once promised that the band should furnish music for the procession.

In a short time after that news of the plan to help the Oak Tree Squirrels was the talk of the forest.

Then said Father Bear, "Let us all have a share in this good work. Let all the friends and neighbors of the forest gather nuts for the North Bend Squirrels. I shall be glad to carry them a big basket full."

"I shall be glad to carry my middle-sized basket full," said Mother Bear.

"I shall be glad to carry my wee, wee basket full," piped up Little Bear.

Then he was selfish in his heart. He wished he might lead the procession. Little Bear wanted to be first when all the friends and neighbors marched through the greenwood with banners waving, with bugles blowing, and with silver trumpets sounding. Yes, he would be first!

The great day came at last. The friends and neighbors met in the forest

to form in procession for the march to North Bend. Father Bear was there with a big, big basket of big nuts. Mother Bear was there with a middle-sized basket of middle-sized nuts. Little Bear was there with a wee, wee basket of nuts, and a selfish feeling in his heart. He would be first!

There was much talking and laughing and bowing and smiling. All the musicians who belonged to the band were tuning their instruments, making wonderful music. It sounded like raindrops falling on forest leaves, like soft winds blowing at sunset, like the whispering of tree tops after a storm. Sweet sounds were calling, calling, up the scale and down the scale.

Little Bear felt more selfish every minute as he danced about and listened. He would be first!

Truth to tell, Little Bear did not know how to be first. He knew better

than to push and crowd and quarrel, like the Wildcat babies, to get what he wanted. He knew better than to say to his father or his mother, "I want to be first!"

Nimby Chipmunk and his family were in charge that day. So Little Bear didn't stay beside his father and mother, but followed Nimby Chipmunk now here, now there, until what he hoped might happen did happen.

When Nimby Chipmunk said at last, "Now, who shall lead the procession?" there before him stood Little Bear, carrying a wee, wee basket of nuts and looking ever so sweet and happy.

"Little Bear shall lead the procession," said Nimby Chipmunk. "Little Bear shall be first." Then to Little Bear he said, "You will know where to turn, because the way is lined with crowds of people waiting to see the procession go by."



“Little Bear shall lead the procession,” said Nimby Chipmunk

So Little Bear was first. Yet he was a wee bit disappointed. He had thought the band would lead the way, the band that was even then beginning to play.

Three hundred grasshoppers and three hundred crickets were all playing:

Fiddle-dee-dee! Fiddle-dee-dee!

Fiddle-dee-dee-dee, dee-dee-dee!

as they stood in their green carriage.

Frogs were playing their banjos:

Kerplunk-plunk-plunk! Kerplunk-plunk-plunk!
Plunkety, plunkety, plunk, plunk, plunk!

The partridge drummers were there, beating their drums:

Whir-whir-whir!

Whir-whir-whir!

Boom, boom, boom-boom-boom!

The beavers kept time with their tails:

Kersplash, bump-bump!

Kersplash, bump-bump!

Bump, bump, bump-bump-bump!

The katydids were there, playing:

Katydid-did-did! Katydid-did-did!
She did, she didn't, she did!

But Little Bear was first, and he had to march ahead of the band and the procession. All he could hear after a few minutes was the soft footfalls of those marching behind him:

Pitpat! Pitpat-pat!
Pitpat! Pitpat-pat!

He felt sober and grown up. He dared not look either to the right or to the left. He dared not take little skipping steps. But it was fine to be first! He held his head high, marching soberly to the tune of the falling feet behind him:

Pitpat! Pitpat-pat!
Pitpat! Pitpat-pat!

Soon he was lonely. Then he was very, very lonely. At last Little Bear stepped back, and Father Rabbit took

his place, hopping, hopping, hippity-hopping! Then Little Bear stepped back again, and changed places with Uncle John Reynard. Then he kept dropping back and back, until he was behind the band, prancing and dancing and having a perfectly beautiful time.

Soon Little Bear found he couldn't see all he wished to see and still walk fast enough to keep up with the band.

"Step along, Little Bear, step along," called the people, watching from the bushes.

But Little Bear did not step along fast enough to keep up with the band. There was so much fun going on to the right and to the left, and so much to see, and so many little skipping steps to take, that he dropped back and back. At last he was at the end of the procession. There he found Father Bear marching with his big, big basket of big nuts, and Mother

Bear marching with her middle-sized basket of middle-sized nuts.

“It is no fun to be first,” Little Bear said, as he marched behind Mother Bear. He swung his wee basket of nuts, and danced along as he could not do at the head of the procession.

All that long, happy afternoon at North Bend, the grateful Squirrels looked for Little Bear to shake hands with him and to tease him. They wanted to laugh at him because he fell back and back until he was last in the procession. But Little Bear said to all, “It’s no fun to be first!”



LITTLE BEAR RUNS AWAY

The Three Bears had never visited Blueberry Plains in blueberry season. Little Bear couldn't understand why.

He had teased and teased to go while the berries were ripe. The Plains were not very far from home. The Three Bears had often gone away on much longer journeys just for a picnic.

“I could start in the morning and get there before sunset walking just like this!” bragged Little Bear, marching slowly down to the gate and back, and looking as if nothing ever could make him hurry.

Father Bear and Mother Bear laughed. But, even so, Father Bear said severely, “This family is never going to Blueberry Plains on a pleasure trip during blueberry season. Now I

do not wish to hear another word about it!"

"Try to get Blueberry Plains out of your mind," said Mother Bear. "You see, pickers are there when the berries are ripe, and it is no place for a little bear. Go roll downhill in a barrel, and forget all about it."

Usually Little Bear liked the fun of rolling downhill in a barrel, but today he felt all out of sorts and cross. So he sat on a big stone with his chin in his paws. He sat still and did nothing but think how he longed to visit Blueberry Plains, where the berries grew so thick the land looked all sky-blue. He had heard robins tell great tales of their doings at Blueberry Plains when berries were ripe.

At last Little Bear made up his mind and whispered softly to himself, "I shall run away some day and visit Blueberry Plains."

Next he said a bit louder, "I shall run away some day and visit Blueberry Plains."

Little Bear thought those words



Auntie Cinnamon's twins came to play with Little Bear

sounded very brave, so he walked to the grapevine tangle and shouted, "I shall run away some day and visit Blueberry Plains."

Early the next morning Auntie Cinnamon's twins came to play with him. Just for fun, when the twins

were starting toward home, Little Bear said to them, "I am going to run away some day and visit Blueberry Plains."

"You wouldn't dare!" exclaimed the twins together.

"I would too," contradicted Little Bear.

"Our folks never go there when berries are ripe," said one of the twins. "Then pickers are thicker there than berries."

But Little Bear laughed and said, "Who's afraid of pickers!"

Next day Little Bear sneaked out of bed in the early, early morning and ran away. He met Yowler Wildcat on his way to the spring for a drink of water.

"Yowler," said Little Bear, "I wish just about noon you would go tell my folks I've run away to Blueberry Plains. Maybe I'll never come home.

I don't want my folks to cry and feel badly. So you tell them, if you please, where I am."

"But, Little Bear," Yowler put in, "the plains are full of pickers! The pickers will get you!"

"Who's afraid of pickers!" Little Bear shouted back over his shoulder as he ran on.

Yowler waited until noon, then did as he was told. He wasn't a bit surprised when Mother Bear began to weep. He started home and had gone only as far as the grapevine tangle when he saw Father Bear traveling by like the wind in November. Yowler noticed he carried a stick with something dangling from the end of it.

Now, just think how Little Bear felt that afternoon when he looked back and saw Father Bear racing along the highway like the wind in November! Little Bear suddenly felt too weak to

stand, so he sat down on a log and began taking "pickers"—as he called them—out of his little suit. Not knowing exactly what to do when his father came up, he spoke first.

"The pickers are getting thick already," he said, without looking up. Then he kept on picking sweetbrier thorns and wild-rose prickers from his coat. "You see, Father Bear, I'm not a speck afraid of pickers, but I s'pose I've got to go straight back home with you."

"Oh, no," answered Father Bear cheerfully. "If you want to run away, why, run along. I came to bring your bundle and stick. All runaways carry a bundle at the end of a stick."

Little Bear was surprised and greatly disappointed. He was homesick already and tired enough to cry. There were sharp prickers in his feet. He did wish his father would make him go home.

“Well, we’d better be jogging on,” Father Bear said after he had whistled a tune cheerfully and rested a bit.



“Well, we’d better be jogging on,” said Father Bear

So on they jogged. Father Bear took such long steps Little Bear had to run to keep up. And how tired he was!

Afterward Little Bear told his mother that he and Father Bear galloped and galloped for miles and miles along

the highway. At last at sunset they reached the hilltop overlooking Blueberry Plains. There Father Bear turned back, saying he had to see some Grizzly relatives on business. He said he hoped Little Bear would always remember the day he ran away. He begged him not to forget the old folks. He must be sure to come back to see them some time. That was all.

Little Bear couldn't speak. His eyes were full of tears and he could scarcely wink them back when his father said, "Good-by," and started away, humming a cheerful little tune.

When he was out of sight Little Bear sat down and cried because he was homesick and lonely. He hadn't expected to be alone. He had thought many of his friends would be there to keep him company. His feet were sore from prickles, his head ached, and he was hungry.

As Little Bear looked about unhappily he saw blueberry bushes on the hilltop stretching out as far as he

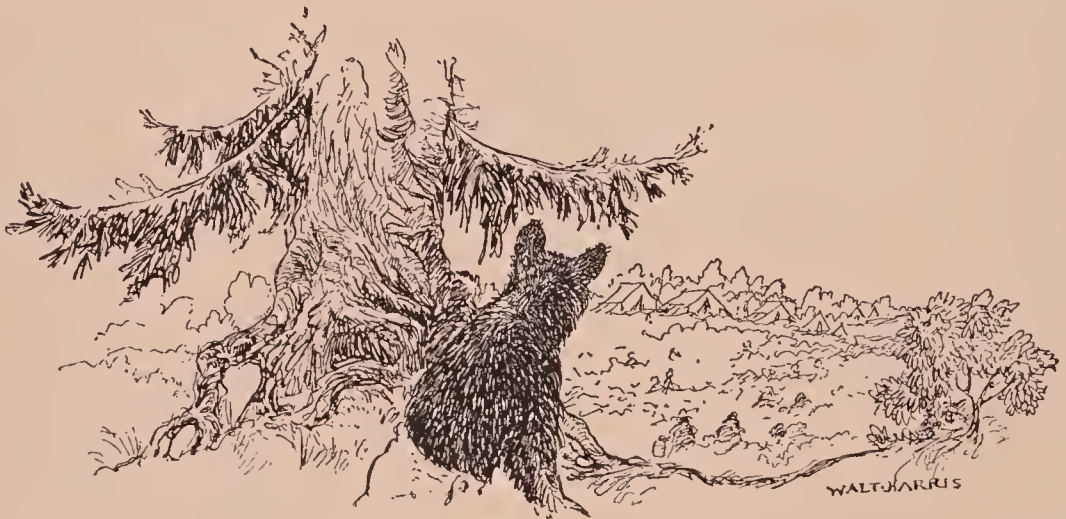


Little Bear sat down and cried because he was lonely

could see. The ground looked all sky-blue with the berries. They were almost as big as cherries.

Little Bear began to eat blueberries. He ate and ate and ate, crawling along on the ground as he picked the berries by the pawful. He crawled on and on until he reached the top of the hill.

There below him, beyond the hill, stretched the wonderful Blueberry Plains, but all around them stood the white tents of berry pickers. At last Little Bear understood what his mother and the Cinnamon twins and Yowler



All around stood the white tents of berry pickers

meant when they spoke of "pickers." They had meant berry pickers.

From camp to camp the pickers shouted to one another and laughed and sang. Little Bear heard dogs barking and saw men carrying guns. He saw two little bears tied to stakes in front of one of the tents. Then he

knew why Blueberry Plains was no place for him when the berries were ripe.

Badly frightened, back and back and back Little Bear crawled, until the pickers could not possibly see him from the Plains. Then he hunted for a hiding place and found a wee cave just the right size for a badly frightened, homesick, blueberry-sick little bear.

When he cuddled down in the cave Little Bear didn't mean to go to sleep. Indeed not, in such a dangerous place! He was only going to rest until he stopped trembling, and then start for home like a March wind chasing winter away.

But when the Man in the Moon looked in a bit later he saw Little Bear sound asleep. Soon after that, along came Father Bear with the Grizzly relatives. They peeped into the tiny cave, and laughed. Father Bear

had been watching from hiding places every minute to protect Little Bear from harm.

“He will sleep until broad daylight,” Father Bear whispered, “and then he’ll make tracks for home. He will come limping along safely enough soon after I get there, even if I don’t start until noon.”

But that was one time Father Bear made a mistake. Before the moon went to bed Little Bear awoke. Feeling better, up he jumped and started for home, running as fast as he could run. Little Bear never forgot that night. He ran softly because he didn’t wish to waken strangers. When he reached home the sun was high in the sky.

His mother was glad to see him. She forgave him for running away. Then she gave him a warm bath and some bread and milk, and did everything to make him feel better before

she put him to bed. Little Bear slept long and soundly.

At suppertime Father Bear came home, hungry and cheerful. "Do not look so sad, Mother Bear," said he. "Cheer up, Little Bear will come jogging home safe and sound one of these days." Then he told her all about Little Bear's adventures.

Mother Bear didn't tell Father Bear all she knew. She was ever so quiet, and she tried hard not to look cheerful. But when Father Bear turned his back and acted fidgety as he looked out the window she winked one eye slyly and smiled a little. When darkness fell, Mother Bear said, "Let's go to bed."

"No, oh, no," said Father Bear. "Let's sit up and keep a light in the window."

"I don't see any sense in sitting up and keeping a light in the window,"

said Mother Bear. "But if we must sit up, please go upstairs and light the candle and bring it down."

So Father Bear tramped heavily upstairs and lighted the candle. Then he saw something humpy in Little Bear's bed. Yes, it was Little Bear!

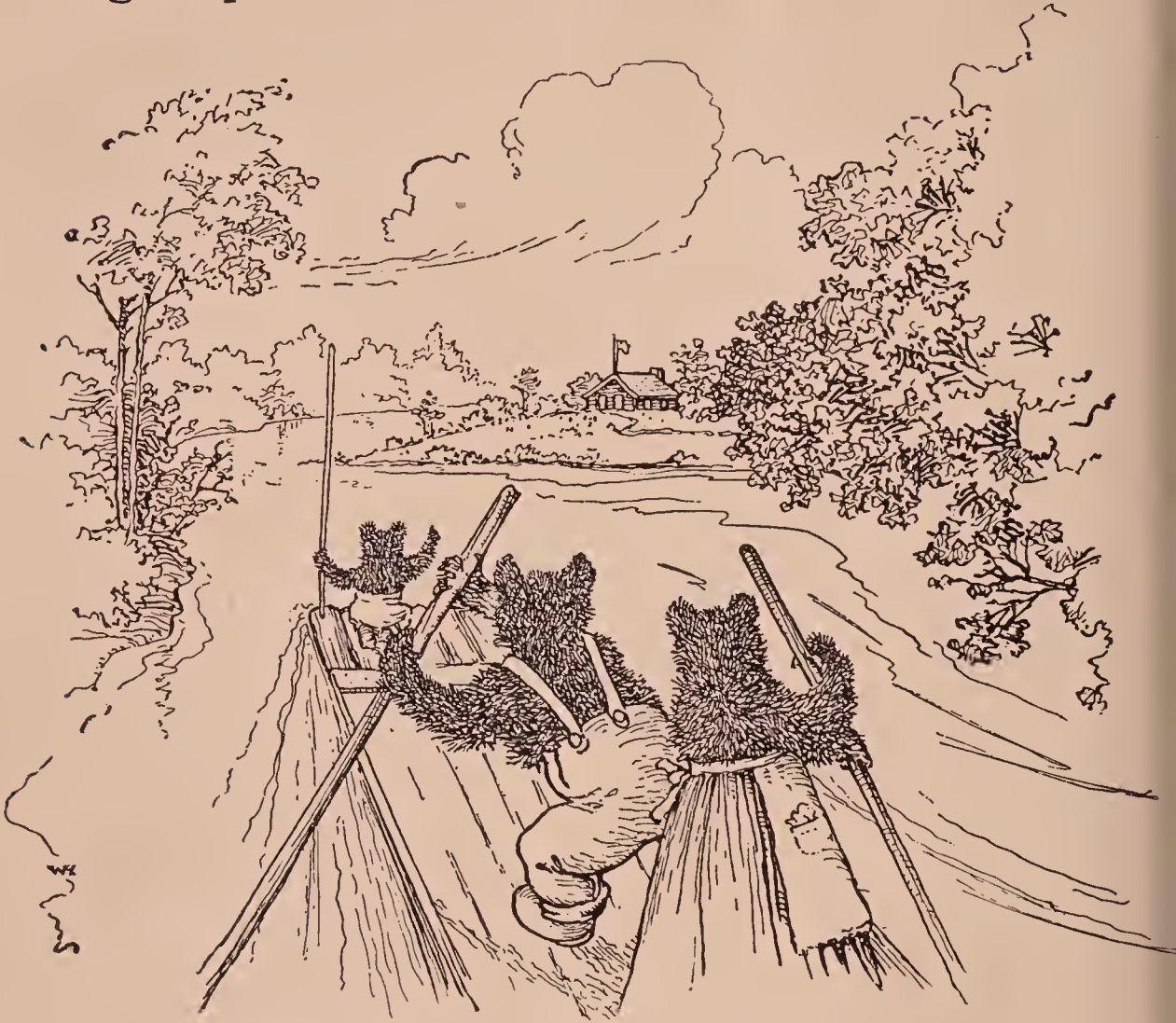
Mother Bear had come upstairs softly after Father Bear, and she laughed at her joke on him. He laughed, too. They made so much noise they woke Little Bear. He half opened his eyes and said sleepily, "I'm sorry I ran away—glad I'm home—going to be a good Little Bear now for always and always!"

After that Little Bear never liked to hear anything said about Blueberry Plains.

A VISIT TO A SCHOOL

It was midsummer, and wild roses were blooming along the river bank behind the Three Bears' house in the forest, and wild birds were singing from every thicket. Just the time for a pleasure trip, thought Father Bear, so he built a raft and took his family floating downstream. The raft was made of logs firmly fastened together. It was big and strong, and had three rustic chairs on it—a big, big chair for big Father Bear, a middle-sized chair for middle-sized Mother Bear, and a wee, wee chair for wee Little Bear. There were also poles for them to keep the raft from bumping against the river bank. There was a long, rather heavy pole made for huge Father Bear to use, a middle-sized pole for

middle-sized Mother Bear, and a long, light pole for wee Little Bear.



The Three Bears saw a little log house on a hillside

It was afternoon, and they were far from home, when they came to a bend in the river. As the raft came swishing and tumbling round the bend the Three Bears saw a little log house

on a hillside and children playing outside the door.

At that very moment, bump! went the raft into the bank, and there it stuck fast among the willows!

“Oh, please do not push the raft into the stream for a few minutes!” whispered Little Bear. “Let us watch the children!”

“Yes, let us watch the children,” added Mother Bear.

So Father Bear, willing to please his family, seated himself in his huge chair, and Mother Bear seated herself in her middle-sized chair. But Little Bear stood up on his tippytoes in his wee little chair, so he could see better.

“Oh, I wish those children would let me play with them!” cried Little Bear, as the youngsters joined hands and danced round and round in a circle.

Plainly, the log building was a schoolhouse, for a moment later out the schoolmistress stepped and began to ring a bell.

The children at once formed in line, boys first, girls behind. Then they all marched into the schoolroom. As they marched they were saying, "Left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot," and their feet made a merry stamping.

After the children were all in the schoolhouse and the door was closed, a song came floating through the open windows.

When the singing was over, the only sounds the bears heard were the songs of birds, and the lapping of water, and the humming of bees. Little Bear said to his father and mother, "I see a little path leading from the river to the schoolhouse, and I see bushes beside one of the

windows. If I go softly, softly, and climb softly, softly into the bushes, may I go and peep into the schoolhouse and see the children?"

"Oh, I do not know about that!" began Mother Bear.

But Father Bear said, "Oh, let him go! Only, Son Bear," he added, "if one of the children should happen to see you, and should say 'bear,' you run straight down to the raft. We shall be ready to push into the stream and get away."

So Little Bear crept softly up the path on the hillside, climbed softly into the bushes, and peeped slyly into the schoolroom. All the children were in their seats with their heads bent over books and slates.

Then the teacher said sternly, "Primer class! Come forward!"

Two little girls and one little boy went to a spot in front of the teacher's

desk and stood with their toes on a crack in the floor. They had blue-covered books in their hands. The little girls edged away from the boy as far as they could while the mistress looked at them. Little Bear was so interested that he climbed closer to the window.

“Open your books,” said the school-mistress.

The three children opened their blue-covered books.

“Joan, you may read the lesson first, if you please.”

So Joan read, “I—see—a—cat.”

“Good!” said the mistress. “Mary, you may read.”

“I—see—a—cat,” read Mary. She knew every word of that lesson.

“Now, Simon,” spoke the mistress to the boy, “let us hear you read.”

Little Bear was sure that Simon did not know his lesson. He was sure

of it because Simon acted so foolish and looked so unhappy. He stood on one foot and then on the other, and twisted and squirmed until the girls giggled.

“Come, Simon,” urged the mistress, “we are waiting.”

Little Bear felt so sorry for Simon that he forgot all about himself. He leaned forward until his paws rested on the window sill. No one saw him, because bushes grew close round that window and he had moved quietly and made no sound.

“Simon,” the mistress said sternly at last, “read the lesson!”

“I—see,” began Simon, “I—see—a—” Then he looked up, but instead of saying “cat,” as the primer said, Simon, with eyes as large and round as saucers, dropped his book and cried, “Bear! I see a bear!”

Sure enough, Simon did. So did all the children. So did the mistress,



Simon dropped his book and cried, "Bear! I see a Bear!"

because Little Bear was right up in the window, trying to tell Simon the word “cat”!

Down the hill ran Little Bear as fast as ever he could go, and scrambled on board the raft. Father Bear and Mother Bear used their poles and quickly pushed the raft into the middle of the stream. Then away went all three of them, laughing.

But Little Bear did not wish to visit school again that day—or that summer.



LITTLE BEAR'S WISH

One morning, when the Three Bears were floating downstream on their raft, they saw a farmhouse in the distance.

“Perhaps we shall never be so near a farmhouse again,” said Mother Bear to Father Bear. “I think we should buy some eggs of the farmer’s wife.”

“Do be sensible!” exclaimed Father Bear. “We have no money, and farmers do not love bears.”

“That does not matter,” said Mother Bear gently. “Tonight, when we build our camp fire for the evening, we must have hens’ eggs to roast for supper. And how can we have hens’ eggs unless we buy them at the farmhouse?”

Father Bear made no answer. He knew Mother Bear would have her way. So he wasted no time trying to argue

about the matter but pushed the raft against the bank and tied it to the willows with a rope of wild grapevine.

“Now, then!” was all Father Bear said after that, as he sat back in his huge chair and folded his arms to watch the fun.

“‘Now, then,’ is what I say, too,” added Mother Bear, laughing. “Honey Cub,” she said to Little Bear, who was wondering what would happen next, “jump off the raft to the bank. Then gather and bring me many long, slim leaves of the cat-tails growing over there. I will weave two baskets, one for the money, one for the eggs.”

Little Bear hurried to obey. But when he returned with his arms full of cat-tail leaves, he said, “Mother Bear, I have made a wish. Please let us have the eggs for dinner, and let us have them scrambled. Father Bear and I like scrambled eggs better than roasted

eggs.” And Little Bear winked at Father Bear and Father Bear winked back.

“No,” said Mother Bear, “we shall not make camp at noon so near a farmhouse, and the eggs shall be roasted. Now run along and get me some long grasses, Honey Cub. I want to weave them, with the slim cat-tail leaves, into the baskets.”

Little Bear obeyed his mother, but he neither danced nor sang as he gathered the grasses. “Noon is the time for dinner,” he told a big green frog, “and I wish for scrambled eggs at noon.”

“Ker-plunk!” said the frog.

Quickly Mother Bear made two pretty green baskets. “One is for wild strawberries,” she explained. “We will fill it to the brim and leave it for the farmer’s wife, instead of money. She will find it in a nest when she goes to gather the eggs.”

“I’ll gladly pick the berries,” said Little Bear, “and I’ll go with you to find a hen’s nest that has eggs in it to scramble.”

“You will stay with your father while I go for the eggs,” answered his mother.

So after Little Bear had filled one green basket with delicious wild strawberries, he stayed with his father while Mother Bear went for the eggs.

“Noon is the time for dinner,” Little Bear said crossly. “And roasted eggs are not so good as scrambled ones.”

“Son Bear,” said Father Bear sternly, “Mother Bear is always right!”

Soon back came Mother Bear, walking fast. When Little Bear saw the eggs in her green basket, he was so much pleased he forgot to be cross, but he did not forget his wish. While Father Bear untied the grapevine rope Little Bear helped Mother Bear cover the eggs with

big green leaves to keep them cool. As he worked he danced and sang for joy.

“Now we are off for a morning’s good fishing!” cried Father Bear, as he pushed the raft into the middle of the stream. Then, giving a wee fish pole to Little Bear and a middle-sized fish pole to Mother Bear, he at once began fishing with his own huge pole and long line.

The Three Bears fished all the morning and caught no fish. At noon, without warning, there was a great splashing in the river, and Father Bear cried out, “I have a bite!”

Well, he pulled, and pulled, and pulled, but could not land his fish. There was great excitement on the raft, then suddenly Father Bear almost caught the fish. Up came the line, up bobbed the fish—a big fish, almost the biggest fish Father Bear had ever caught. But back fell Father Bear, bumping into Mother Bear, who bumped into Little



Little Bear sat right down in the basket of eggs!

Bear. Then, because the three were standing one right behind the other, Little Bear sat down in the basket of eggs! At that the fish flopped back, splash! into the water—and the Three Bears were hungry!

“Something has happened to the eggs!” exclaimed Little Bear. “I am afraid they are all squashed.”

Sure enough! When Mother Bear took the leaves off the basket of eggs, what a sight those eggs were! Every shell was broken. Then said Father Bear, laughing: “Roasted eggs are not so good as scrambled eggs, and noon is the time for dinner! Come, Mother Bear, let us go ashore and make camp. We are a long way from the farmhouse.”

“Father Bear is always right,” said Mother Bear cheerfully. She emptied the broken eggs into the frying pan and began picking out pieces of shell and tossing them into the water.

That is how it came about that the Three Bears built a camp fire at noon and had scrambled eggs for dinner. They had a jolly time eating their dinner in the woods and talking about the big, big fish Father Bear had almost pulled out of the stream.

But after dinner Little Bear laughed and sang:

I had my wish!
Because Daddy lost his fish!
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum-dum-dum!

until at last the Three Bears joined hands and danced round the camp fire, singing together:

Little Bear had his wish
When Father Bear lost his fish!
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum-dum-dum!

FATHER BEAR'S GUMDROPS

One time all the neighbors in the old, old forest where the Three Bears lived went on a picnic. They started early because Father Deer promised to take them to Spruce Valley, and that was a long way off. The air was cool and sweet with the perfume from blooming flowers, and traveling was pleasant and easy.

Little Bear skipped merrily along, joking with Sally Beaver, laughing at the Wildcat babies, and running races with Mother Fox's children. He helped the Porcupine twins and the Otter children over fallen logs, and was kind to the baby Deer. He raced with Auntie Cinnamon's youngsters, and tried to leap as high as Father Deer's eldest son. Such joyful traveling made the

way seem short. Before any one even thought of feeling tired, Father Deer said, "Here we are!"

Then in the shade of the tall spruce trees the picnic fun began. Everyone was busy and happy when Little Bear saw Father Bear cross the brook and go up the hill. He carried an empty sack over his shoulder.

"Where are you going, Father Bear?" Little Bear called, hurrying after him. "And what are you going to do?"

"I am going after spruce gumdrops to fill my sack," said Father Bear. "You had better stay and play with the children."

So Little Bear stayed and played with the children, but he kept wondering about gumdrops. At last he stopped playing long enough to ask Mother Bear, "What are gumdrops? Why is Father Bear going for them, and where do they grow?"

Mother Bear laughed. "Spruce gumdrops," she answered, "are drops of spruce gum dried hard. Father Bear learned that Goldilocks and all her family, and the hunters who come from cities, almost always chew gum. So Father Bear decided to gather a sackful of spruce gumdrops today and trade them at the fair next week for butter and eggs."

"Oh, we must not let Father Bear go to the fair!" cried Little Bear.

"Indeed not!" his mother answered. "He isn't going to the fair. He expects to send the gumdrops by Mother Hubbard's dog. But gumdrops do not grow, Little Bear. They are the dried sap of the spruce tree. When the sap comes through the bark in drops, it hardens into gum, which men and women like to chew."

"I want to chew gum!" said Little Bear.

“We want to chew gum!” cried all the other children, who had been standing round listening to what Mother Bear was saying.

“We all want to chew gum!” added Mrs. Maria Wildcat. And when she played she was chewing gum, all the others laughed.

“Maria has watched the farmer and his hired men chew gum,” explained Mr. Bob Wildcat.

“I tried it once,” said Mother Bear. “The gum stuck my teeth together, and it was five minutes before I could open my mouth enough to talk. We’ll ask Father Bear to pass the gum, and then we shall have some fun.”

Just then a stranger appeared. He was a tall, kindly faced brown bear. He carried a staff and fairly galloped through the valley. In his haste he knocked Grandmother Beaver flat on her back. It was plainly an accident,



The stranger, a tall, kindly brown bear, carried a staff

but the stranger did not stop to say, "I beg your pardon!" Grandmother Beaver was not at all hurt by the fall, but just the same she didn't like it.

When Little Bear said, "I wish Father Bear would come back," everyone at the picnic seemed to feel the same way. That was why they were all looking up the hill and saw him the minute he came in sight.

"Come here, and come quickly!" called Father Bear. "Bring the lunch baskets!"

Up the hill scrambled all the picnickers, carrying the baskets. Father Bear counted, to be sure all were there.

"Please all sit down and make yourselves comfortable," said he, "while I pass the gumdrops."

When Father Bear had begun to pass the gumdrops as fast as he could, with Mother Bear's help and Little Bear's help, he said, "I met a big

brown bear a few minutes ago. He is a performing bear who has escaped from a circus. After you begin to chew gum I'll tell you what he said."

The picnickers put the hard lumps of spruce gum into their mouths—moss, sticks, and all—and began to chew. When everyone was chewing—Mother Bear and Little Bear, as well as the other picnickers—Father Bear said, "Is there any one here who would like to ask a question?"

All of them wished very much to ask questions, but try as hard as they would they couldn't speak. Gum was stuck fast in their short teeth and in their long teeth, in their upper teeth and in their lower teeth.

When they found they couldn't talk, the picnickers all began to prance round wildly and wave their arms. Of course they laughed and laughed.

“This is not a dancing time,” said Father Bear. “And I’m glad you can’t talk or screech or scream. If you’ll sit down again and stop making motions, I’ll tell you what the brown bear said.”

After a minute of waiting, Father Bear began softly, “Dad Fox is wiggling his ear, and Bob Wildcat is waving his tail. You must not make the least bit of a noise, boys. Passing strangers might hear and look up, for the brown bear told me all the circus animals had escaped. They are now following him straight through this valley on their way to the highroad. It is seventy-nine miles from here in a straight line.”

Mother Bear was quite sure it was only seventy-seven miles from there to the highroad. She tried to tell Father Bear so, but the spruce gum held her mouth shut tight.

“I’ll do the talking this time,” Father Bear said to her gently. And, frightened though the picnickers were, a smile went round.

Then all at once came the sound of many feet pounding the earth. It came nearer and nearer until elephants and tigers and lions, and one huge hippopotamus after another, and another, and another, and another, and one rhinoceros after another, and another, and another, came crashing through the valley. Camels and wild horses, zebras, giraffes, all kinds of wild animals, crowded and pushed and hurried through the valley. But not even one glanced toward the spot where the frightened picnickers sat speechless on the hillside.

When the last circus animal had passed out of sight, Father Deer was able to say, as well as any deer could say anything with gum still holding

his teeth together, "Father Bear, you saved our lives!"

Father Bear did not know what to



Each one said politely, "No, I thank you"

reply to this. So, for fun, he again passed the gumdrops.

By that time grown-ups, children, and all could talk. And as Father Bear came round with the gumdrops they said, very politely indeed, each for himself, "No, I thank you."

WHEN LITTLE BEAR BRAGGED

One rainy day the Three Bears were sitting by the fire in their cosy house in the woods, telling stories. First Father Bear would tell a story. Then Mother Bear would tell a story. Then Father Bear would have a turn again. Between times, Little Bear asked questions.

The three were happy and merry until Mother Bear told the story about the race between the hare and the tortoise. She told how the slow-going tortoise was the first to reach the goal because the hare took a nap and did not wake up until after the tortoise had passed him and had won the race.

“You see,” Mother Bear explained, “the hare was so sure he could win

that he did not even try to reach the goal quickly. He was so swift-footed that he thought he could go to sleep if he chose and still come out ahead of the slow tortoise.”

“Wasn’t he silly!” exclaimed Little Bear. “If I were going to run a race with Grandpa Tortoise, I should go this way until I reached the goal.” Little Bear pranced up and down the room until he made even the porridge bowls rattle in the cupboard. “I guess I should know enough to know that Grandpa Tortoise would keep stepping ahead and stepping ahead and get to the goal in time! You would not catch me taking any naps if I started out to run a race with anyone! No, sir-ree!”

Mother Bear laughed heartily at this, but Father Bear looked solemn. He did not like to hear Little Bear brag at all.

“So you think, Son Bear,” said he, “if you should run a race with Grandpa Tortoise you would be wiser than our old friend, Peter Hare? Is that what you mean?”

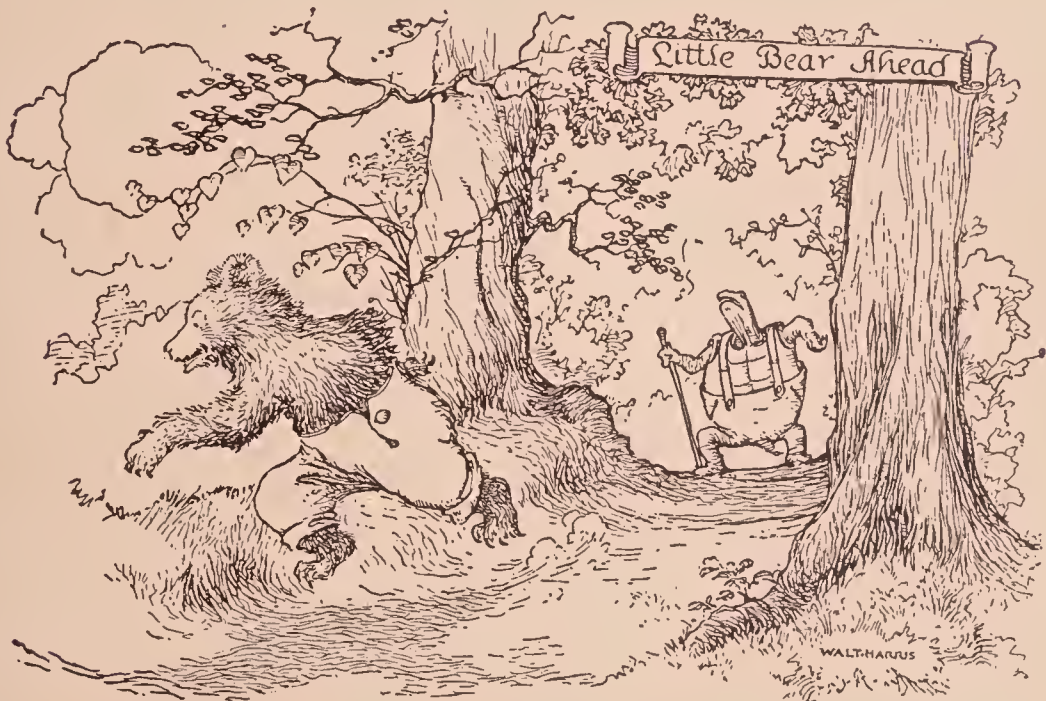
“I know I should,” bragged Little Bear. “I’d say, ‘Good-bye, Grandpa Tortoise!’ and off I’d start, and I should beat him before he had time to think. Then, afterward, if I were sleepy and wanted to, I should take a nap.”

“Very well,” said Father Bear. “I shall see Grandpa Tortoise. If he is willing to run a race with a silly little fellow like you, you shall have your chance. And Peter Hare shall be the judge.”

So when the rain was over, the friends of the Three Bears and of the Hare and the Tortoise met in the woods to see the fun.

Before the race began, Little Bear noticed that the Hare and the Tortoise

were laughing about something. But he did not even wonder what it was. He had nothing to worry about.



Little Bear said, "Good-by, Grandpa Tortoise," and off he ran

At last the word was given: "One, two, three, go!"

Away went the Tortoise, slow and easy. Off started Little Bear, running so fast that he was out of breath long before he had passed the first oak tree. He was glad to stop for a second and have a drink of dew from

an acorn cup that Friend Tree Toad offered him.

“Thank you,” said Little Bear, as he gave back the cup. “But that was not enough. I shall have to step over to the spring.”

“Remember, Little Bear, how the Hare lost the race!” Friend Tree Toad warned him.

“Oh, I shall not go to sleep,” answered Little Bear, tossing his head. “Really, Grandpa Tortoise walks even slower than I thought he did.”

Beside the spring a number of Little Bear’s old friends, dressed in green satin coats, were playing leap-frog. They asked Little Bear to play with them, and soon he was showing the frogs what long leaps he could make. Then, in a little while, many baby rabbits came and joined in the fun. The next Little Bear knew, he was chasing baby rabbits over the

rocks, and catching nuts the squirrels threw to him from the tree tops, and having a joyful playtime.

An hour passed quickly. Then suddenly Little Bear remembered he had started out to run a race.

Back he ran to the path, and away he flew toward the goal, while the baby rabbits laughed and danced and danced and laughed. Father Bear had sent them to play with Little Bear, but they did not know why he had sent them until that minute.

Stepping along, stepping along, slowly but surely, Grandpa Tortoise had reached the goal, just as he had in the long-ago day when he ran the race with the Hare. As Little Bear came near the goal, he heard the neighbors shouting: "Hurrah for the champion! Hurrah for the champion! Hurrah for Grandpa Tortoise!" Even Father Bear was shouting.

Little Bear remembered his manners. His father had told him what to do if he lost the race, so he straightway walked up and shook hands with Grandpa Tortoise. And the Hare, although he must have been laughing in his sleeve, remembered his manners, too, and did not let any one see him laugh.

After that the old friends and neighbors went home with the Three Bears to eat blackberries and honey and tell stories round the fire. Grandpa Tortoise went, too. He had traveled so slowly that he was not even tired.

That afternoon when the stories were told Little Bear asked a few questions, as usual. But he did not brag! And when Peter Hare winked at him once or twice, he laughed.

LITTLE BEAR'S TASK

“What are you thinking about so hard, Son Bear?” asked Father Bear one sunshiny morning. Little Bear was sitting on the doorstep, his head resting on his paws, saying nothing.

“I was thinking,” was the answer, “that I wish some one would help the Otters.”

“I never knew the Otters needed any help,” said Father Bear, as he began making a new basket of reeds.

“Well, I wish some one would make their crooked paths straight,” Little Bear went on soberly. “I’ve liked the Otters ever since we got to know them so well that time we were camping. You remember, don’t you, Father Bear, how I found that little lost baby Otter and took him to his people?”

And don't you remember how we slid downhill with them all the afternoon? I've liked the Otters ever since then. It is too bad they have such short legs and such heavy bodies.

"Father Otter told me about their cross-country journey every fall. The worst part is through our little jungle from Brookside, where they live, to Sunset Rock on our river bank. The path goes round little hilly places and stumps. It goes under logs and logs and logs, this way and that way, such a long, crooked path to the river."

Little Bear could not sit still as he talked about the troubles of his Otter friends. Father Bear could not keep from laughing as he watched Little Bear prancing around

"Some one should make a straight path for them," went on Little Bear. "Will you and Mother Bear do it? I do wish you would!"

Father Bear was so surprised that for a minute he did not know what to say to his son.

“Well, if you are too busy, who will make them a straight path?” Little Bear went on, without waiting for his father to answer.

“Why not talk it over with Sally Beaver?” Father Bear asked. “Her family are great workers. Besides, they live near the Otters.”

Straight went Little Bear to his friend Sally Beaver. He told her how every fall the Otter family go traveling. He told her that the baby Otters, and the others, too, have short, short legs and heavy bodies. And he told her how hard it is for them to go trailing through the forest, round little hills and stumps, under logs, this way and that way, making such long, crooked paths.

“Let them stay at home, then, like other folks,” was Sally Beaver’s

answer. But her tone was cheerful and pleasant even if her words were not. "It is plain," she said, "that the Otters go traveling just for fun. We Beavers are too busy to help such gadabouts. Besides, why don't they stay in the water where they belong?"

The next friend Little Bear asked to straighten the crooked path of the Otters was Father Deer. How he laughed at the notion! Uncle Brown Bear was cross about it. And Robert Wildcat grinned unpleasantly and rubbed his hands, saying, "No, not I, Little Bear, not I!" Nor would any of the neighbors in the old forest promise to make straight the crooked path of the Otters.

At last one morning Little Bear took his wee stone hatchet and started out for Sunset Rock.

"Where are you going to play today?" asked Mother Bear.

“I am not going to play in the woods today,” was Little Bear’s answer in a big, big, grown-up voice. “I shall go to Sunset Rock and make straight the crooked path the Otters use every fall!”

“Oh,” cried Mother Bear, “that is an elephant’s task, Son Bear! A little fellow like you must not try what big bears could not do. Run and play, Little Bear. Do not—”

“Let him try the elephant’s task,” spoke up Father Bear. “Let him try, and let him grow strong trying to do an elephant’s task in helping others. Run along, Son Bear, run along!”

So Little Bear ran along through the forest until he came to Sunset Rock by the river. Then he began work — whackety — whackety — whackety — whack — whack — whack! cutting down slender trees and clearing away brush with his wee stone hatchet.



WALT HARRIS

Little Bear began cutting down slender trees with his wee stone hatchet

And whackety — whackety — whack ! he worked for three days, until all the neighbors began to laugh. Even Sally Beaver could not see that he had done anything with all of his whackety-whacking. But all the next day she helped him clear away the little willows that grew close by the river, and Father Beaver cut down some trees for him. Much cheered, Little Bear kept at work, whackety—whackety—whack! day after day. Day after day, he kept trying to make a straight path for the Otters. It was hard work. Mother Bear felt ready to cry.

“Because,” said she, “it is an elephant’s task! Such a little fellow with such a little hatchet cannot do an elephant’s task!”

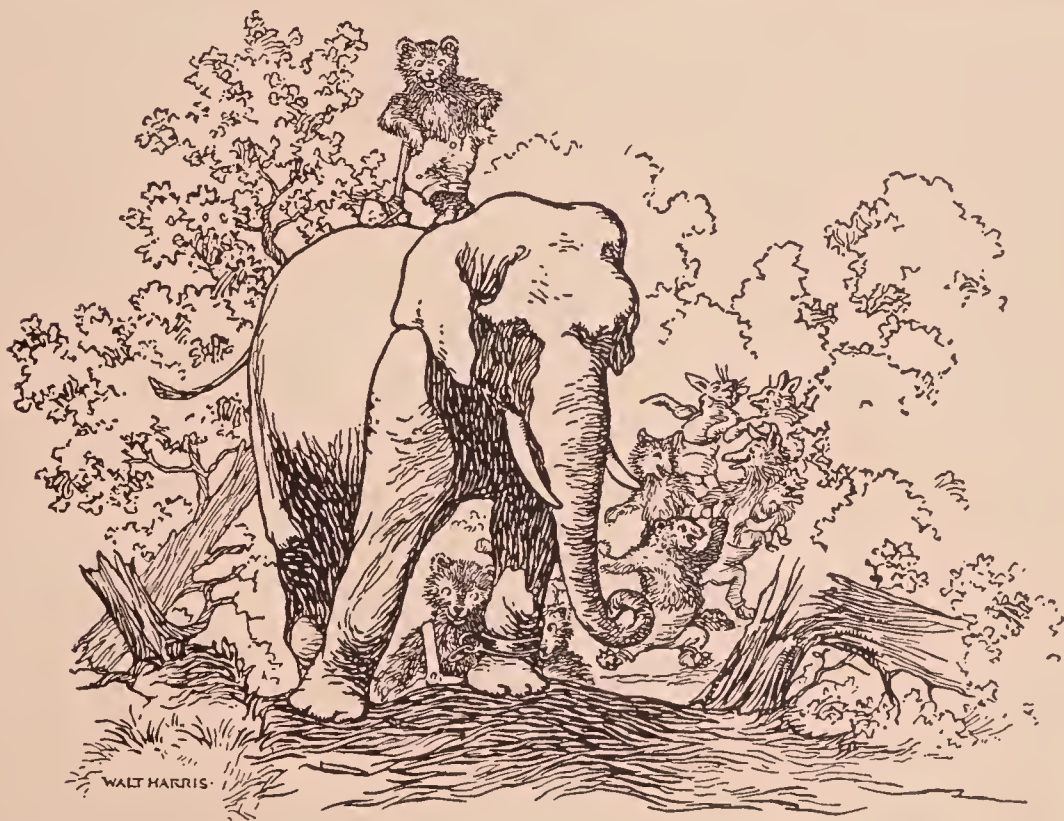
Then, one morning, a wonderful thing happened. Little Bear was working away as usual—whackety—whackety—whack — whack ! thinking

pleasant thoughts about his friends, the Otters. But he was not cutting down many trees nor moving many logs as he worked, when an elephant heard him.

He was a friendly elephant, who had run away from a circus. Little Bear had never seen an elephant before. But when the great beast came crashing through the jungle and asked, "What is going on here?" he was not afraid, because the elephant had such a kind face.

Little Bear told him at once, and when the elephant heard the story, and saw the wee stone hatchet, he laughed and laughed and laughed. It seemed as if he would never stop laughing. But after a while he stopped long enough to pat Little Bear gently on the head and say, "Bravely done, Son! Now I shall help you finish your task."

And he did! With his strong trunk he pulled up trees and bushes by the roots and moved logs. He trampled



The elephant led the grand march with Little Bear on his back

down a straight elephant-wide path all the way from Sunset Rock to Brookside. The neighbors, hearing a great noise, all came running to see what was going on. When the path was finished, elephant-wide, they formed a procession. Then they joined in a

grand march all the way from Sunset Rock by the river to Brookside, and back again.

The grand march was led by the elephant, with Little Bear on his back. Then came Father Bear and Mother Bear close behind. And after them, two by two, came all the neighbors, and the joyful Otter family with their babies, all singing happily with the Three Bears:

Ta-de-dum, dum, dum !
Ta-de-dum, dum, dum !
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum,
Ta-de-dum, dum, dum !

After swinging Little Bear to the ground the friendly elephant went away, saying, "Thus may all good works end."

As for Little Bear, he was glad the neighbors decided to have a picnic dinner in the woods that day, and to

play games and be jolly. He was so happy, for at last the Otters had a short, straight path instead of a long, crooked one through the jungle.

Father Bear and Mother Bear were happy, too. They were happy because they had such a kind-hearted, stout-hearted son.



MOTHER SKUNK'S KINDNESS

Once upon a time Little Bear went for a long walk along the river path. He was alone, so he did not know he had gone so far away from home until Father Kingfisher saw him and called:

“It is time for you to turn round and go back, Little Bear! It will soon be dark in the woods, and you might get lost. Remember, you have no wings to fly home quickly.”

Little Bear looked for the sun. Sure enough, there it was sinking behind the trees and leaving a long, shining trail on the river. It was time to go home.

“Thank you, Father Kingfisher,” answered Little Bear. “I was having such a good time I forgot I was far

from our little house. But I shall run back fast now. So good night!"

Away he ran. But before he had passed more than three bends in the river he saw a man fishing. In the woods near by was a tent, with a bright camp fire burning, and beside the camp fire was a man cleaning a gun.

Little Bear was so frightened he sat down and cried. Mother Skunk heard him crying, for she and her six children were out hunting beetles for their supper.

"Why are you crying?" Mother Skunk asked. "What is the matter, Little Bear?"

Little Bear told her about the two men, one on either side of his path. "And I am afraid to go by them!" he whimpered.

"Come, come, child, dry your eyes," said Mother Skunk. "You have been



WALT · HARRIS

Little Bear was afraid to go down the path past the two men

kind to my children, and now I shall take care of you. Stop crying, and follow me."

"But won't the men catch you?" asked Little Bear.

"Oh, no," answered Mother Skunk. "They will not touch us. You follow me. Come, children."

On walked Mother Skunk, slowly and comfortably, with her six pretty children and Little Bear following one behind another, as she had told them to do.

When the man who was fishing saw Mother Skunk walking by with her children and Little Bear, he sat just as still as a mouse. All he did was to wink.

The man by the fire stopped cleaning his gun when he saw Mother Skunk walking by with her children and Little Bear. He, too, sat just as still as a mouse. All he did was to wink.

“Now, Little Bear,” said Mother Skunk, when they had gone a few steps more, “the children and I will stay



Mother Bear tucked Little Bear into his wee bed

here a while and catch beetles, but you must run along home. The men will not hurt you while we are in their path, never fear.”

“Thank you, Mother Skunk!” Little Bear called over his shoulder, as he pit-patted for home as fast as he could run.

When he reached home he told all about what had happened to him coming home the river path. Then he walked up and down in front of the fireplace to show Father Bear and Mother Bear how Mother Skunk, with her six pretty children and Little Bear one behind the other, had walked past the two big men, as if she were not afraid of any one in the woods.

How the Three Bears laughed!

But when Mother Bear tucked Little Bear into his wee bed that night, she kissed him and said:

“Let us always be thankful for good, kind friends!”

LITTLE BEAR'S ERRAND

Father Bear and Mother Bear were planning to go to Sherwood Forest, and Little Bear wished to go, too. It seemed to him that he could not give it up and stay at home. Little Bear did not mind staying at home alone, but it was autumn and he longed to tramp all day through the woods to Sherwood Forest, and then home again. But Father Bear said that, if he and Mother Bear wanted to get back home by twilight of the same day they started, they must go without Little Bear.

“Why, Son Bear,” said Father Bear, the afternoon before the day they planned to start to Sherwood Forest, “you walk too slowly to go on such a long trip with Mother Bear and me.”

The three were comfortably seated on a pile of logs at the top of their hill, and Father Bear tried to make Little Bear see why he should stay at home. "Son Bear, it's like this: It would take a week, at least, to go to Sherwood Forest if you went along. Mother Bear and I know how to tramp straight ahead these cool days and get where we're going quickly. But you, Son, would have to stop to look into every bird's nest and wonder who lived in it in the summer. You would have to stop and speak to every toad and ask him where he is going to pass the winter."

It was early autumn and the world was lovely. Mother Bear did not like Father Bear to tease Little Bear that way, so she cut him short. "Do look at those white clouds, Father Bear," she said. "See how wonderful the colors are from our hill!"

“Yes, so they are,” agreed Father Bear. “And that reminds me that Sonny, here, would have to stop to hunt for nuts and gather thorn apples and red and yellow autumn leaves. And at every bush we passed he would surely stop to find the last blackberries. He would have to play a game with the chipmunks and be shown the squirrels’ winter stores. He would be obliged to talk with every one of Sally Beaver’s aunts and uncles we met! O Son Bear! Son Bear! We know your way of going through the woods! Home is the very best place for you tomorrow.”

“I could go straight through the woods fast like this if I wanted to,” Little Bear piped up. And to show them how he could travel without looking to the right or to the left, he ran swiftly round and round in a circle until over he tumbled.

“Yes, and then down you would go, and we should have to take turns



“I could go straight through the woods like this”

carrying you!” exclaimed Father Bear. Then how the Three Bears laughed!

Just then, scrambling up the hill, came little Mewey Wildcat. She was not laughing, poor little thing!

“Why, what’s the matter, Mewey?” asked Mother Bear. “Do tell us quickly!”

“My little brother Yowler is cutting a new tooth. He’s so sick catnip doesn’t do him a bit of good,” Mewey answered. “My ma wants some one to go quickly for my pa. He has gone to Farmlands on chicken business. Ma says Friend Blue Jay is going to



*Bob Wildcat out
on chicken business*

Farmlands at three this afternoon to plant acorns for a forest, and he’d take the message to Pa. Ma wants Pa to come right straight home. She wants to know if Father Bear will go over to Oak Valley, where Friend Blue Jay lives, and ask him to tell Pa to come home as fast as ever he can travel. If he doesn’t

she'll give it to him when he does come. She'd send me to Oak Valley, but I have to hold Yowler's nose when Ma gives him the catnip tea so he has to swallow whether he wants to or not."



Yowler

"Let me go and tell Friend Blue Jay," said Little Bear. "It's only half a mile from here on a straight road to Oak Valley."

"Very well," agreed Father Bear, "but this is an important errand. You must not play by the way."

Mother Bear was about to brush Little Bear's hair and freshen him up a bit, when suddenly something happened. It even made little Mewey Wildcat forget her brother Yowler was cutting teeth, and she laughed until she could not stand.

Without waiting to put on his cap, Little Bear had sat down at the top

of the steepest place on the hill, and down he went, bumpety slide, bumpety slide. Bumpety-bumpety slide over slippery pine needles he went, until he was at the bottom of the hill.

Mother Bear, Father Bear, and Mewey stood up just in time to see him flying down the road to Oak Valley as if a circus man were after him.

Still laughing, Mewey went back home, feeling much happier. Father Bear went out to rake his garden and get it in order for winter, while Mother Bear waited on the hilltop for Little Bear to get back. He was traveling so fast the last time she saw him she was sure he would soon be home again.

Mother Bear waited a long, long time, but no Little Bear came in sight. She waited until she was so worried she went down to the garden where

Father Bear was raking to ask him what he thought was the matter.

Father Bear looked at the sun before he answered: "It isn't late



Father Bear looked at the sun

yet. He probably is playing in the valley beside the brook."

Mother Bear tried to feel cheerful, but as she went into the house to set the table for supper she didn't sing as usual. Her heart was heavy. An hour passed. Two hours dragged slowly by,

yet Little Bear was not in sight. When the moon began to shine and the stars came out, even Father Bear was frightened.

“Let us walk over to Oak Valley and ask Mrs. Blue Jay what she knows,” he said. Off they started, leaving supper untasted on the table.

Mrs. Blue Jay said she had not seen Little Bear. Yes, Friend Blue Jay did go to Farmlands about three o'clock.

“Come, come!” urged Mother Bear. “Let us hurry over to Maria’s and see if she has any news from Bob Wildcat. It may be Little Bear has been there all this time.”

Little Bear had not been seen by Mrs. Maria Wildcat nor by any of the children, nor was Mr. Bob Wildcat at home. But Yowler was perfectly well—cured by catnip tea.

“Let us go home now and think what is to be done next,” said Father

Bear, as he loaned Mother Bear his big red handkerchief because she was crying.

Just think of Father and Mother Bear's joy when they found the house



There sat Little Bear, eating porridge

door open! And there, sitting in the moonlight, they saw Little Bear eating porridge as if he were starving.

“Where have you been?” asked Father Bear and Mother Bear, both speaking at the same time.

“Me? I’ve been to Farmlands Gate to tell Mr. Bob Wildcat Yowler was sick. I told him Yowler’s mother said to come right straight home. Friend Blue Jay was gone, and you said it was an important errand.”

“Not to Farmlands Gate, ten miles there and ten miles back? No!” cried Mother Bear.

“Pooh! Yes!” answered Little Bear jauntily.

“Did you walk all that long way to do an errand for the Wildcats?” asked Father Bear in cross tones.

“No!” was the quick reply. “I ran!”

For a minute Mother Bear looked at Father Bear and Father Bear looked at Mother Bear. Then the Two Bears began to laugh. They laughed until it seemed they never would stop. But they did, because Father Bear had to stop laughing to say something.

“Son Bear,” said he, “you are a good traveler at times. You shall go to Sherwood Forest tomorrow.”

“Now let us eat supper,” said Mother Bear, as she filled Little Bear’s brown mug with blackberry juice.

That was a merry supper, but Little Bear was glad to go to bed right after it was finished, because Father Bear said they must get an early start for Sherwood Forest.



THE SURPRISE PARTY

The year Jack Frost came late, Little Bear did not like to hear any talk about Sleepy Cave. This was the name of the Three Bears' winter home. There were three beds in Sleepy Cave, all ready and waiting for the Three Bears—a big, big bed of fir boughs and moss for huge Father Bear, a middle-sized bed of fir boughs and moss for middle-sized Mother Bear, and a deep, deep bed of feathery moss for Little Bear.

For the beds there were feathery moss blankets taken from fallen logs in the forest. There was one soft, warm, moss blanket for huge Father Bear, one for Mother Bear, and the softest, warmest moss blanket of all for Little Bear.

Sleepy Cave was big and warm and dry. There was no chance for snow to drift into the cave, for the doorway



was under the shelter of a broad overhanging rock, and its back was toward the cold north wind. There was blackberry jam put away in that cave, and honeycombs and other good things to

eat in case the family should wake up and feel hungry before spring.

But Little Bear did not want to hear a word about Sleepy Cave. It was the same old story with him. He always began, "I don't want to sleep all winter! 'Young cub,' Mrs. Maria Wildcat said, 'you'll never be anything but a Baby Bear, eating porridge out of a wee, wee bowl, and sitting in a wee, wee chair, and sleeping in a wee, wee bed, for another hundred years if you lie around and sleep all winter! You'll never grow up!' She always says that! And Mr. Bob Wildcat, he said—"

Mother Bear stopped him with, "There, there, don't let me hear another word about Maria Wildcat or any of the Wildcat family! I think I said this to you once before!"

"But I don't want to sleep all winter," whined Little Bear. "I want

to stay in our own little house in the woods and see the snow in the evergreens. I'd love to play in the snow and go sliding on the ice. I want to stay here and eat porridge out of my little bowl and sit in my little chair and sleep in my little bed! Father Deer's children don't sleep all winter. They make tracks in the snow, and they lie down to rest in the evergreens and watch for their enemies in the middle of the day! Father Deer told me about it all over again! I want to stay here and play all winter like other folks! Sally Beaver's mother, she said —"

"Hush! Hush!" said Mother Bear
"You've said enough!"

Mother Bear spoke sternly. But by and by, when the little fellow went out and sat on the doorstep to think, she said to Father Bear, "Suppose we have a surprise party for Little Bear?"

“A good idea!” agreed Father Bear. “But there is snow in the air. If there is to be a party it had better be this afternoon. Whom do you wish to invite?”

Mother Bear smiled as she answered, “Let us invite the children of all our friends who live in caves in the winter. I think that will be the pleasantest. We’ll invite Auntie Cinnamon’s children, and Uncle Brown Bear’s family, and the Porcupine twins, and the Field Mouse children, and the young Muskrats. If you will do the inviting, I will make blackberry jam and honey cakes and get the house in order.”

Little Bear didn’t even ask a question as Father Bear started out, looking rather proud of his new fur overcoat.

In the afternoon, as Father Bear and Mother Bear were happily waiting



Mother Bear took Little Bear to the cupboard to show him the blackberry sandwiches and honey cakes

for Little Bear's company, there came a knock at the door, and in came Auntie Cinnamon.

"I came to say," said she, "that my children cannot come to the party. They have gone to sleep for the winter. No, thank you, I cannot stay, but I am glad to stop in a minute to say good night until spring."

"Sleepyheads!" exclaimed Little Bear when Auntie Cinnamon had gone on her way.

Next came Uncle Brown Bear. He was so plump he was out of breath from walking fast. He had to rest a minute before he could say, "Our children are all asleep and cannot come to the party. But Auntie Brown sent me over to say thank you, and good night until spring!" And away went Uncle Brown Bear.

"The sleepyheads!" Little Bear exclaimed again, and how he laughed!

“But where is the party, Mother Bear? Am I invited?”

Just then came another knock at the door, and Mother Porcupine walked in to say the twins were tucked away in bed for the winter. So they could not come to Little Bear’s surprise party.

Little Bear was so pleased when he learned he was to have a surprise party that he wasn’t disappointed when the laughing Blue Jay came with a message from the Field Mouse mother saying the Field Mouse children just couldn’t keep their eyes open, they were so sleepy. So of course they could not come to the party.

“I’ll sit by the window and see who does come,” said Little Bear, happy as he could be, thinking of the party.

Now no one else had been invited to the party. So Mother Bear took

Little Bear to the cupboard to show him the blackberry sandwiches and honey cakes. Then Father Bear stepped out to ask Friend Blue Jay please to fly quickly away and invite the Wildcat children and the young Squirrels and Chipmunks and Foxes to come immediately to the party.

The Blue Jay flew joyfully away to do this errand. And soon dozens of chattering, noisy wildwood children came to the party.

But when they reached the house they found Little Bear sound asleep with a smile on his face, dreaming of the party! The merry children could not waken him, although they tried their best, for they wished to share with him the blackberry jam and honey cakes.

Late that afternoon, when the party was over and the frolicking children had gone, Father Bear took Little Bear in his arms, and Mother Bear closed

the house. Then away went the Three Bears to Sleepy Cave.

When Little Bear was snugly tucked in his feathery moss bed, Mother Bear kissed him and said, "I'm so glad the little fellow was happy when he went to sleep."

And that very night it snowed, and snowed—and snowed!









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